

Ask Jerry

BY JERRY HELMS  www.jerryhelms.com

Dear Jerry,

Playing Standard American, I held:
 ♠9 2 ♥K 8 3 ♦Q 7 4 ♣A J 8 5 2.

My partner opened 1♠ and with my 10 HCP, plus 1 point for length, I responded 2♣. Partner rebid 2♠, which I assumed to be minimum, so I passed. After partner rather easily took 10 tricks, my question is, should I have bid again?

Maggie

Hi, Maggie,

Being the practical soul that I am, if your partner is going to make a game, always bid again! If a partscore is the limit, simply pass. This is my kind of partner, the type who always makes the right decision!

With the flippant side of me out of the way for the moment, let's address the real issues.

As a strong proponent of playing 2/1 game force (which pleases friend and fellow columnist Larry Cohen but irritates friend and fellow columnist Pat Harrington), I shall attempt to dance around that particular issue. Incidentally, both standard and 2/1 have strong, well thought-out arguments supporting their respective positions. Playing 2/1 as a game force, there is no issue, as you must respond with a forcing 1NT with your example hand.

In Standard American, the requirements for responder to mention a new suit at the two level have long been identified as 10 or more points. While true, I make a slight exception. Using the 10-point guideline, I have discovered that "mo" often creates a problem.

In this case, "mo" is short for momentum. When opener is known to possess 13 or more points and responder 10 or more points, momentum often propels the partnership to a negative score.

In some cases, uncertainty causes the other extreme, where a reasonable, or perhaps very good, game was missed (as in your case). To begin a solution, I propose the following set of agreements for Standard American bidding:

- 1 ♣: A 2/1 response should suggest closer to 11 or more points rather than 10.
- 2 ♣: A 1NT response to a major suit opening shows 6–10 points, not 6–9.
- 3 ♣: A 2/1 response promises a second rebid unless opener specifically rebids 2NT, which shows a balanced 12–14 points.
- 4 ♣: In keeping with No. 2 above, a simple rebid of opener's first suit is 100% forcing.
- 5 ♣: After making a 2/1 bid, if responder rebids 2NT, three of his original suit, or makes a simple raise of partner's suit, opener may pass.

Using this set of "rules" solves one problem opener might experience.

Holding:

♠Q J x x x x x ♥A J ♦A x ♣K x,

would you really want to jump to 3♠? Somehow, queen-jack "empty seventh," with a 7-2-2-2 distribution and 15 HCP, does not seem the type of holding you would wish to jump rebid the

spade suit. Or perhaps, holding:

♠A x x x x x ♥A Q ♦A x ♣K x x

after a Standard American 2♣ response, opener is certain the values for some game or perhaps even slam are present, but surely it would be best to rebid and show the six-card or longer spade suit without risking the possibilities that partner may pass.

With the hand you held, having opted to bid 2♣ the first time, you owe partner a raise to 3♠. As long as Standard American remains your system of choice, these suggestions should help.